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BIG GAME ANIMALS INCREASE ON NATIONAL FORESTS

Apparent increases in the number of all big-game animals except mountain goat, moose and caribou, are recorded in the latest annual game census of the National Forests, just announced by the Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture.

The annual game census represents careful estimates of the number of game animals on the National Forests, which are the most extensive game areas now remaining, particularly in the Western States. Although it is impossible to "count noses" of game animals, the estimates are based on year-long observations and studies by district rangers and other Forest officers thoroughly familiar with the ground, and are considered the most accurate record available. The latest estimates are made as of December 31, 1928.

preceding year,

Compared with the/ deer on the National Forests showed a gain of last census, 47,400 in the/ totaling 748,000 in number. California led all the States in number of deer, with 245,400 recorded. The elk population increased from 74,200 to 78,200, with Wyoming leading in number. Black or brown bear totaled 52,200 according to the census showing, while grizzly bear (including the Alaska brown bear) numbered 3,400. The estimated number of mountain goats was 19,300, while mountain sheep numbered 13,800. Antelope increased from 7,700 to 8,500. Moose, however, fell off in number, only 6,970 being recorded,

as compared with 7,950 a year earlier. The number of beaver was placed at 117,600.

Accurate information regarding the number of game animals is essential in the development of game management plans for the National Forests, according to the Forest Service. Other major problems in game administration include increasing the supply of game where it has become depleted, determining the game-carrying capacity of each National Forest, and determining methods of holding the number of game animals in balance with carrying capacities.

On areas where valuable species have been exterminated, "planting" is one method of increasing game population. Attempts to use western deer for restocking eastern forests have not been very successful. Plans are being developed, however, for trapping animals on the Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina, which is becoming overstocked, for planting elsewhere. Last year, mountain sheep donated by the Dominion Government of Canada were placed on the Medicine Bow National Forest in Colorado and the Wichita National Forest in Oklahoma. Several lambs have already been born, and prospects seem good for the establishment of these "plants."

On a few National Forests, notably the Kaibab in Arizona, the deer have increased to the point of overpopulation, with resulting starvation due to scarcity of feed. Plans have been made for cooperation with the State officials of Arizona to remove the excess number of deer.

The National Forests contain more than 100 State game refuges and 16 Federal refuges, covering all told more than 20,000,000 acres. Elsewhere the forests are open to hunting within the limitations prescribed by State game laws.

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